511532 NASA Technical Paper 3150 Feasibility Study of a Low-Energy Gamma Ray System for Measuring Quantity and Flow Rate of Slush Hydrogen Jag J. Singh, Chih-Ping Shen, and Danny R. Sprinkle QUANTITY AND FLOW RATE OF SLUSH HYDROGEN CSCL 22B Unclas H1/19 0078275

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# NASA Technical Paper 3150

1992

Feasibility Study of a Low-Energy Gamma Ray System for Measuring Quantity and Flow Rate of Slush Hydrogen

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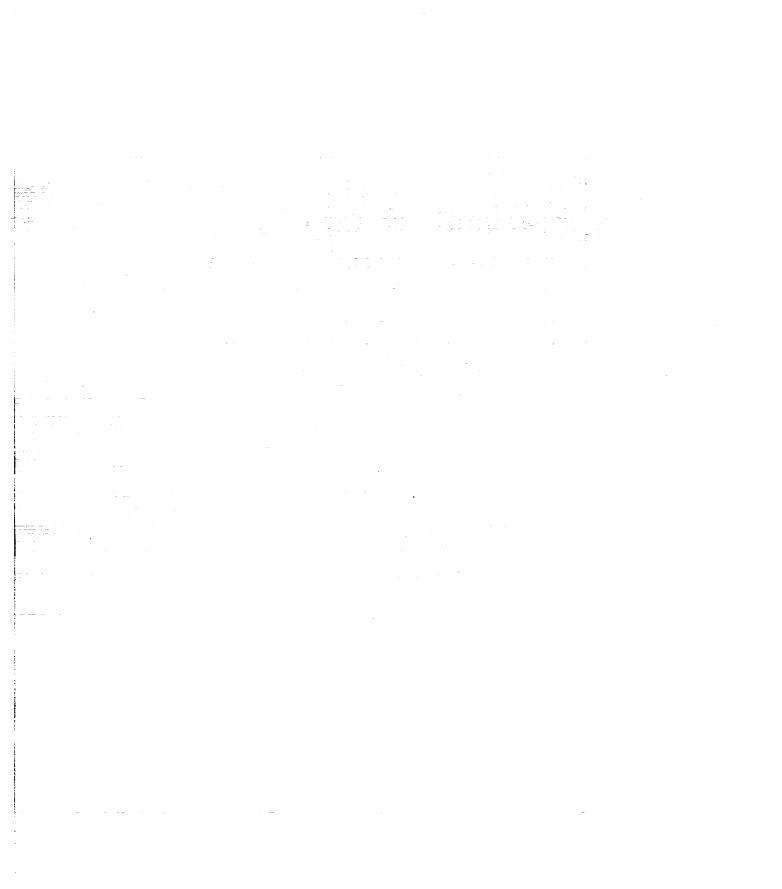
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## **Abstract**

As part of a study to demonstrate the suitability of an X-ray or gamma ray probe for monitoring the quantity and flow rate of slush hydrogen, mass attenuation coefficients for  $\mathrm{Cd}^{109}$  X- and gamma radiation in five chemical compounds have been measured. The  $\mathrm{Ag}^{109}$  K X rays were used for water and acetic acid, whereas E3 transition from the first excited state at 87.7 keV in  $\mathrm{Ag}^{109}$  provided the probe radiation for bromobenzene,  $\alpha^2$ -chloroisodurene, and cetyl bromide. Measurements were made for a single phase (gas, liquid, and solid) as well as mixed phases (liquid plus solid) in all cases. It has been shown that the mass attenuation coefficient for the selected radiations is independent of the phase of the test fluids or phase ratios in the case of mixed-phase fluids. This report describes the procedure and results for the five fluid systems investigated.

## Introduction

Slush hydrogen is being considered (refs. 1 and 2) as a propellant for the National Aero-Space Plane (NASP). It has low mass, high energy content, and higher density than liquid hydrogen. However, no suitable technique is currently available for monitoring the quantity and flow rate of a fuel whose phase configuration is continuously changing. We have investigated the feasibility of a low-energy gamma ray system for gauging the quantity and flow rate for such fuels. It is based on the principle that the mass attenuation coefficient of a chemical compound for gamma radiation does not depend on the phase of the chemical. This report describes the results for five mixed-phase fluid systems.

### Theoretical Background

When a narrow beam of gamma rays passes through matter, some of the rays are scattered or absorbed in the medium because of interactions with the atoms of the medium. For example,

$$I = I_0 e^{-\mu x} \tag{1}$$

where

- I intensity of gamma radiation arriving at detector
- $I_o$  intensity of gamma radiation incident on test medium
- $\mu$  attenuation per unit path length in the medium (i.e., the linear attenuation coefficient)
- x path length in the medium

The linear attenuation coefficient  $(\mu, \text{ cm}^{-1})$  for an elemental medium is given by

$$\mu = \sigma n = \sigma \frac{N\rho}{A} \tag{2}$$

where

- $\sigma$  total interaction cross section per atom,  ${
  m cm}^2/{
  m atom}$
- N Avogadro's number on physical scale, 6.025  $\times$  10<sup>23</sup> atoms/mole
- $\rho$  density of the medium, g/cm<sup>3</sup>
- A atomic or molecular weight, g

Since  $\sigma$  is a function of gamma ray energy,  $\mu$  is clearly energy dependent. The expression for  $\mu$  can be generalized for any medium containing different kinds of atoms. It is the basis of the conventional nuclear radiation attenuation (NRA) monitors.

A more useful variation of equation (2) is

$$\frac{\mu}{\rho} = \sigma \frac{N}{A} \tag{3}$$

where  $\mu/\rho$  is in units of centimeters squared per gram and called the mass attenuation coefficient of the medium for the incident gamma rays. Mass attenuation coefficient is a more fundamental parameter than the linear attenuation coefficient since it is independent of the actual density and physical state of the medium. If the medium is a mixture of several different compounds or elements, its mass attenuation coefficient is given by

$$\left(\frac{\mu}{\rho}\right)_{\text{mixture}} = \sum_{i} w_i \left(\frac{\mu}{\rho}\right)_i \tag{4}$$

where

- $w_i$  fraction by weight of the *i*th component
- $\left(\frac{\mu}{\rho}\right)_i$  mass attenuation coefficient of the ith component

For a multiphase mixture of any given chemical compound, equation (4) can be written as follows:

$$\left(\frac{\mu}{\rho}\right) \text{ multiphase } = \sum_{i=1}^{3} w_i \left(\frac{\mu}{\rho}\right)_i$$

$$= w_1 \left(\frac{\mu}{\rho}\right)_{\text{solid}} + w_2 \left(\frac{\mu}{\rho}\right)_{\text{liquid}} + w_3 \left(\frac{\mu}{\rho}\right)_{\text{gas}}$$

$$= \left(\frac{\mu}{\rho}\right)_{\text{single phase}} (w_1 + w_2 + w_3)$$

$$= \left(\frac{\mu}{\rho}\right)_{\text{single phase}} (5)$$

It is therefore expected that a measurement of linear attenuation coefficient  $\mu_{\text{mixture}}$  for a multiphase mixture of a given compound should provide its instantaneous density  $\rho_{\text{mixture}}$ , since  $\mu/\rho$  for any of its single phases is presumably already known. Exploitation of this principle in the NASP program will require simultaneous measurement of fuel volume by judicious locations of several counting systems in the fuel tank (ref. 3). If total fuel volume measurements are made every second, the rate of decrease of the remaining fuel in the tank should equal its rate of consumption (or flow rate out of the fuel tank).

## **Experimental Procedure and Results**

Five multiphase systems were selected to verify the principle of phase mixtures. They were water, acetic acid, bromobenzene,  $\alpha^2$ -chloroisodurene, and cetyl bromide. These systems were selected for convenience of handling and appropriateness of their physical properties, as summarized in table I.

Table I. Summary of Chemicals Studied

	Melting	Boiling	Chemical
Chemical	point,	point,	purity, percent
species	°C	°C	(a)
Water	0.0	100.0	100
Acetic acid	16.6	118.5	99.9
$\alpha^2$ -chloroisodurene	33.4	122.5	98
Bromobenzene	-31.0	156.0	99
Cetyl bromide	18.0	149.0	97

<sup>a</sup>Except for acetic acid, all chemicals were obtained from Aldrich Chemical Company. Acetic acid was supplied by J. T. Baker Chemical Company.

All systems exist in liquid phase at room temperature (25°C) except  $\alpha^2$ -chloroisodurene. They can be solidified and vaporized rather easily. The Cd<sup>109</sup>/Ag<sup>109</sup> radionuclide was selected as the source of probing photons. It has a reasonable half-life (454 days)

and emits appropriate energy photons. The Xand gamma radiation photons were counted with a NaI(Tl) counter. The attenuation coefficient measurements were made in standard narrow-beam geometry (ref. 4). All measurements were made at the temperatures necessary for the appropriate phases of the test chemicals. For instance, in the case of water,  $\mu_{\rm gas}$  was measured at 100°C,  $\mu_{\rm liquid}$  was measured at room temperature (25°C), and  $\mu_{\text{solid}}$  was measured at 0°C. Figure 1 shows the schematic diagram of the experimental system. The test cell for liquid, solid, and liquid plus solid mixtures of phases of water and acetic acid consisted of a multicomponent 51- by 51by 51-mm Dupont Teffon cube, shown in figure 2. The other three chemicals were tested in a specially designed quartz cell, shown in figures 3 and 4. An appropriately heated 102-mm-long quartz cylindrical cell, through which vapors from the boiling liquids were passed, was used to provide a selected gas medium for X-ray attenuation measurements. (See fig. 5.) The gas-phase densities were calculated from the ideal gas law (i.e.,  $\rho_{gas} = PM/RT$ , where P is the pressure, R is the gas constant, T is the vapor temperature, and M is the molecular weight of the chemical compound). The liquid-phase densities were measured with a precision specific gravity chain balance, accurate to 0.0001. The solid-phase density values were determined by extending the graph of  $ho_{ ext{liquid}}$  versus T for the test chemical to a temperature 5° below its solidification temperature. The slush densities, on the other hand, were determined from the graph of  $\rho_{ ext{liquid}}$  versus T exactly at the melting point of the solid phase of the chemical. The liquid-phase densities were measured at a minimum of six temperatures for a good least-squares linear fit to the data for  $\rho_{\text{liquid}}$  versus T.

The results are summarized in table II and illustrated in figure 6. The last column in table II(c) lists the theoretical value of mass attenuation coefficient of the species tested (ref. 5). It should be noted that we have included two other chemical compounds (nitrogen and dibromomethane) in table II and figure 6, even though they required higher energy gamma rays for measuring their  $\mu/\rho$  values. It is apparent from the data

$$\rho_{\rm slush} = \frac{M_1 + M_2}{(M_1/\rho_1) + (M_2/\rho_2)}$$

where  $M_i$  and  $\rho_i$  are the mass and density of the *i*th phase (ice or water).

 $<sup>^{1}</sup>$  In the case of water, ice density  $\rho_{\rm solid}$  was taken from the Handbook of Chemistry and Physics and the slush density  $\rho_{\rm slush}$  was calculated for several percentages of ice in water as follows:

Table II. Summary of Values for Selected Fuel Systems

## (a) Linear attenuation coefficient

		Experimental <sup>a</sup> linear attenuation coefficient $\mu$ , cm <sup>-1</sup> , for—				
Chemical species	X- or gamma radiation energy, keV	Gas phase	Solid phase	Liquid phase	Slush	
Water Acetic acid $\alpha^2$ -chloroisodurene Bromobenzene Cetyl bromide	22.1/25.0 22.1/25.0 87.7 87.7 87.7	$(3.6485 \pm 0.0106) \times 10^{-4}$ $(9.6104 \pm 0.0895) \times 10^{-4}$ $(2.5410 + 0.0080) \times 10^{-3}$	$0.5709 \pm 0.0040$ $.5445 \pm .0077$ $.1880 \pm .0050$ $.8759 \pm .0083$ $.3673 \pm .0037$	$0.6246 \pm 0.0037$ $0.5377 \pm 0.0088$ $0.1825 \pm 0.0045$ $0.8220 \pm 0.0085$ $0.3592 \pm 0.0032$	$ b0.6101 \pm 0.0011  .5508 \pm .0019  .1863 \pm .0051  .8678 \pm .0141  .3649 \pm .0048 $	
Nitrogen <sup>c</sup> Dibromomethane <sup>d</sup>	667 511	$(3.700 \pm 0.3000) \times 10^{-3}$	.2177 ± .0035	$.0680 \pm .0061$ $.2041 \pm .0040$		

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>a</sup>The errors quoted are entirely due to statistical fluctuations in the number of photons registered in the counting system.

(b) Density

		Experimental <sup>a</sup> density $\rho$ , cm <sup>3</sup> , for—			
Chemical species	X- or gamma radiation energy, keV	Gas phase	Solid phase	Liquid phase	Slush
Water	22.1/25.0	$58.8 \times 10^{-5}$	0.9167	0.9973	$^{b}0.9697$
Acetic acid	22.1/25.0	$186.5 \times 10^{-5}$	1.0646	1.0491	1.0621
$\alpha^2$ -chloroisodurene	87.7		1.0700	1.0220	1.0480
Bromobenzene	87.7	$451.7 \times 10^{-5}$	1.5650	1.4910	1.5620
Cetyl bromide	87.7		1.0168	.9972	1.0072
Nitrogen <sup>c</sup>	667	$48.0 \times 10^{-3}$		.8970	
Dibromomethane <sup>d</sup>	511		2.6800	2.4950	

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>a</sup>The errors quoted are entirely due to statistical fluctuations in the number of photons registered in the counting system.

 $<sup>^</sup>b\mathrm{Slush}$  water was made with different solid fractions. This value corresponds to a solid fraction of 36.29 percent.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>c</sup>Required higher energy gamma radiation (Cs<sup>137</sup>) to penetrate through thick nitrogen gas bottle walls and liquid nitrogen Dewar walls. Purity was 100 percent. Vapor phase value for pressure of 4.139 MPa.

 $<sup>^</sup>d$ Gamma radiation energy from Na<sup>22</sup> was used for this species because of its high bromine content. Purity was listed as 99+ percent by manufacturers.

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#### Table II. Concluded

## (c) Mass attenuation coefficient

		Experimental <sup>a</sup> mass attenuation coefficient $\mu/\rho$ , cm <sup>2</sup> /g, for—				
Chemical species	X- or gamma radiation energy, keV	Gas phase	Solid phase	Liquid phage	Cll	Theoretical <sup>b</sup>
Water				Liquid phase	Slush	$\mu/\rho$ , cm <sup>2</sup> /g
	22.1/25.0	$0.6205 \pm 0.0018$	$0.6228 \pm 0.0044$	$0.6263 \pm 0.0037$	$0.6270 \pm 0.0011$	0.6226
Acetic acid	22.1/25.0	$.5153 \pm .0048$	$.5115 \pm .0072$	$.5125 \pm .0084$	$.5186 \pm .0018$	.5106
$\alpha^2$ -chloroisodurene	87.7		$.1757 \pm .0047$	$.1786 \pm .0044$	.1778 ± .0049	.1770
Bromobenzene	87.7	$.5625 \pm .0018$	$.5597 \pm .0053$	$.5513 \pm .0057$	$.5556 \pm .0090$	.5508
Cetyl bromide	87.7		$.3612 \pm .0036$	$.3602 \pm .0032$	.3623 ± .0048	.3615
$Nitrogen^c$	667	$.0775 \pm .0045$		$.0758 \pm .0068$		.0768
${ m Dibromomethanc}^d$	511		$.0812 \pm .0013$	$.0818 \pm .0016$		.0811

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Required higher energy gamma radiation (Cs<sup>137</sup>) to penetrate through thick nitrogen gas bottle walls and liquid nitrogen Dewar walls. Purity was 100 percent. Vapor phase value for pressure of 4.139 MPa.

 $^d$ Gamma radiation energy from Na<sup>22</sup> was used for this species because of its high bromine content. Purity was listed as 99+ percent by manufacturers.

that the values of the mass attenuation coefficients for all the systems are independent of their physical states.

As a further test of the validity of equation (5), the experimental and calculated values of the densities of multiphase mixtures of  $\alpha^2$ -chloroisodurene and acetic acid were compared. The experimental values of the density of the mixture  $\rho_{\rm exp}$  were determined from  $\mu_{\rm exp}/(\mu/\rho)_{\rm theory}$  ratios for the test chemicals. The calculated values of the density  $\rho_{\rm cal}$  were determined from the following relation:

$$\rho_{\text{cal}} = \frac{l_1 \rho_1 + l_2 \rho_2 + l_3 \rho_3}{l_1 + l_2 + l_3}$$

where  $l_i$  and  $\rho_i$  represent the path length and density of the individual phases (solid, liquid, and gas) of the test chemicals.

The results for  $\alpha^2$ -chloroisodurene are  $\rho_{\rm exp}=1.0331\pm0.0124$  g/cm³ and  $\rho_{\rm cal}=1.0392$  g/cm³. For acetic acid, the results are  $\rho_{\rm exp}=1.0619\pm0.0127$  g/cm³ and  $\rho_{\rm cal}=1.0590$  g/cm³.

## Discussion of the Proposed Slush Hydrogen Monitoring System

Figure 7 shows a schematic diagram of the proposed slush hydrogen monitoring system. It is as-

sumed that the interface of gaseous hydrogen and slush hydrogen will remain a well-defined plane without the use of an appropriate restraining diaphragm.<sup>2</sup> It is also assumed that the slush hydrogen mixture is well stirred to ensure its steady flow and to avoid sedimentation of solid hydrogen.<sup>3</sup>

For clarity only a single pair of detectors are shown. Obviously, several such pairs will be needed to determine the volume of the fuel in the tanks (ref. 3).

The horizontal detector system in figure 4 can provide the slush density  $\rho_{\rm slush}$  as shown below. Let  $I(d_2)$  be the counting rate at detector 2:

$$I(d_2) = I_o e^{-\mu_{\text{slush}} d_2} \tag{6}$$

where

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>b</sup>Reference 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Operation in microgravity environment might dictate the necessity for a restraining diaphragm.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Active steps will have to be taken to ensure the validity of these assumptions if slush hydrogen is to be used as a propellant for NASP.

- $d_2$  distance between the source and the detector in horizontal system
- $I_o$  incident photon flux in the horizontal system

 $\mu_{\rm slush}$  linear attenuation coefficient for slush hydrogen in the horizontal path

With  $\mu_{\rm slush}/\rho_{\rm slush} = \mu_{\rm liquid}/\rho_{\rm liquid}$  known from system calibration data, equation (6) can easily provide  $\rho_{\rm slush}$  from a measurement of  $\mu_{\rm slush}$ .

The hydrogen slush level at any time—and hence the total slush volume in the tank—can be determined with the vertical detector system. Suppose the instantaneous height of the gaseous hydrogen—slush hydrogen interface is x. Then the counting rate I(x) at detector 1 is given by the following expression:

$$I(x) = I_o' \exp\left[-\mu_{\text{slush}} \ x - \mu_{\text{gas}}(d_1 - x)\right]$$
 (7)

where

- $I'_o$  incident photon flux in the vertical system (it can be arranged to be equal to  $I_o$ )
- $d_1$  distance between the source and the detector in the vertical system (it can be arranged to equal  $d_2$ )

 $\mu_{\rm gas}$  linear attenuation coefficient in gaseous hydrogen

The only unknown in equation (7) is x, since  $\mu_{\text{slush}}$  is already known from equation (6) and  $\mu_{\text{gas}}$  is easily calculable from the following equation:

$$\frac{\mu_{\text{gas}}}{\rho_{\text{gas}}} = \frac{\mu_{\text{liquid}}}{\rho_{\text{liquid}}} = \frac{\mu}{\rho}$$
 (8)

where  $\mu/\rho$  is the calibration constant for hydrogen. A simultaneous measurement of temperature and pressure of the pressurizing hydrogen gas can provide a value of  $\rho_{\rm gas}$  and thus enable a calculation of  $\mu_{\rm gas}$ .

Since linear attenuation coefficients are strong functions of the photon energy and the test medium atomic number, it will be necessary to use much lower energy gamma ray sources for slush hydrogen measurements. A 5.9-keV  ${\rm Fe}^{55}/{\rm Mn}^{55}$  source should serve the purpose well, as indicated by typical calculations

for slush hydrogen (50 percent solid):

$$I(x) = I_0 e^{-\mu x}$$
  
= 0.52 $I_0$  ( $x = 25$  cm)  
= 0.26 $I_0$  ( $x = 50$  cm)

Clearly there is a reasonably strong attenuation, concomitant with a statistically strong survival rate, for the 5.9 keV X rays through appropriate path lengths in slush hydrogen. An additional advantage of using a low-energy radiation source is the convenience of shielding against it.

## **Concluding Remarks**

Mass attenuation coefficients for Cd<sup>109</sup> radiation have been measured in a number of mixed-phase fluids. These measurements have clearly confirmed, as expected, that the mass attenuation coefficients for X and gamma rays in fluids are independent of the physical phases of the fluids. It can therefore be concluded that a similar system based on an appropriate photon source—such as Fe<sup>55</sup>/Mn<sup>55</sup> (5.9 keV)—can serve as the basis for slush hydrogen monitoring onboard the National Aero-Space Plane.

NASA Langley Research Center Hampton, VA 23665-5225 February 20, 1992

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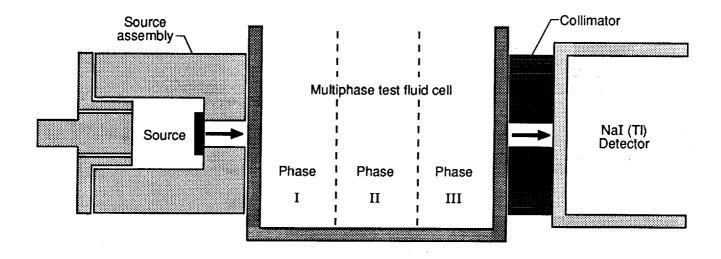


Figure 1. Setup of experimental system.

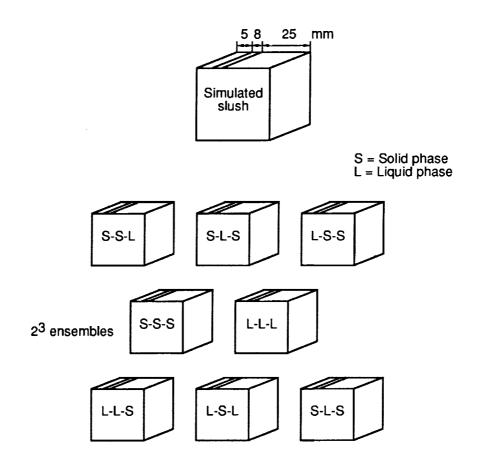


Figure 2. Test cell for producing simulated slush mixture for water and acetic acid.

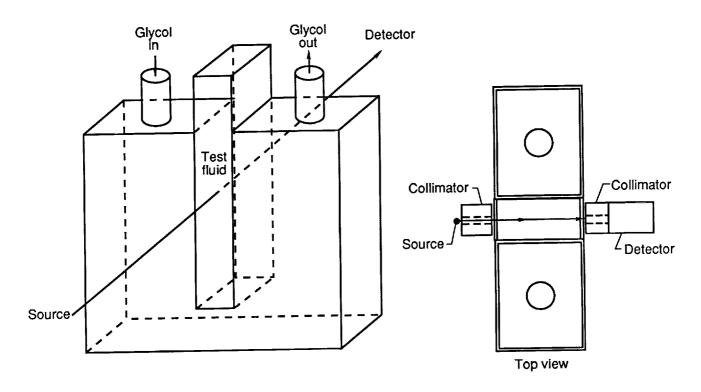


Figure 3. Test cell for cetyl bromide and acetic acid measurements.

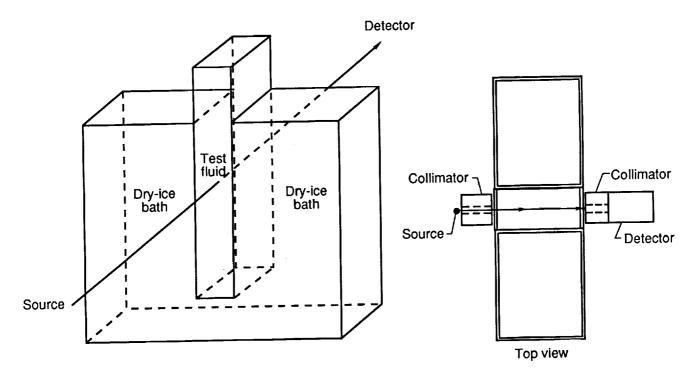


Figure 4. Test cell for  $\alpha^2$ -chloroisodurene and bromobenzene measurements.

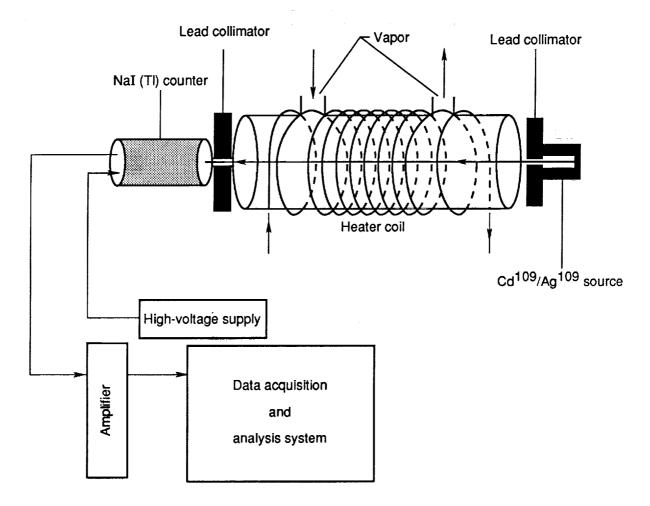
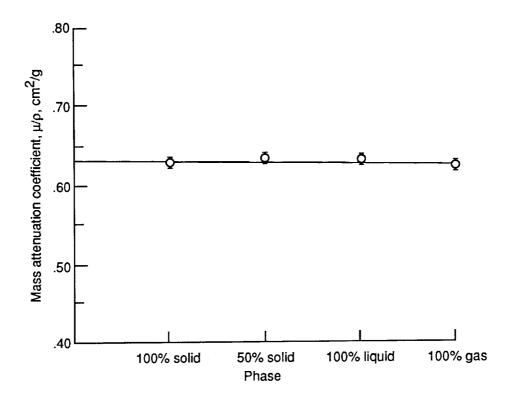
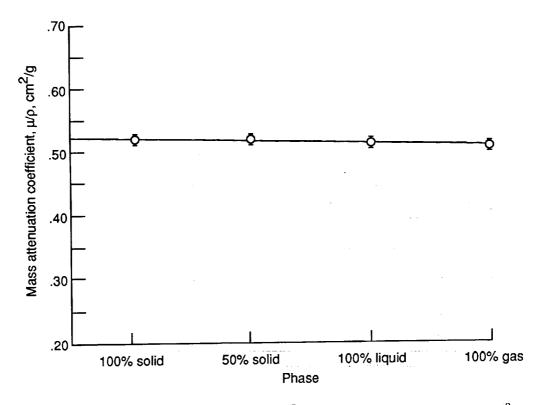


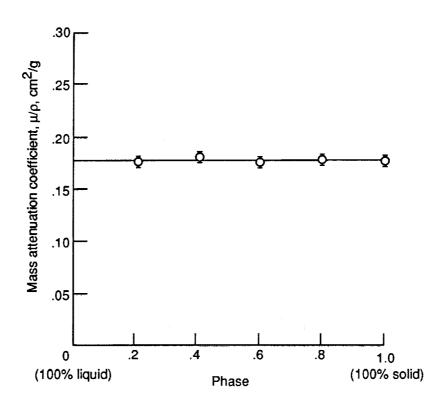
Figure 5. Experimental system for measuring linear attenuation coefficient of gaseous media for  $\mathrm{Cd}^{109}/\mathrm{Ag}^{109}$  X-radiation.



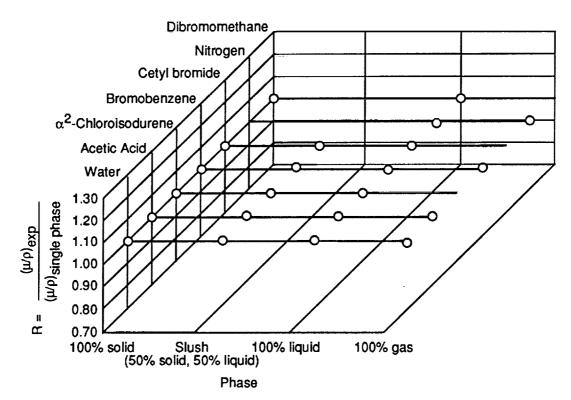
(a) Results for water;  $(\mu/\rho)_{\rm theory} = 0.6226~{\rm cm^2/g}; (\mu/\rho)_{\rm exp} = 0.6242~\pm 0.0034~{\rm cm^2/g}.$ 



(b) Results for acetic acid;  $(\mu/\rho)_{\rm theory}=0.5106~{\rm cm^2/g};~(\mu/\rho)_{\rm exp}=0.5145\pm0.0044~{\rm cm^2/g}.$  Figure 6. Mass attenuation coefficient for Cd<sup>109</sup>/Ag<sup>109</sup> X- or gamma radiation.



(c) Results for  $\alpha^2$ -chloroisodurene;  $(\mu/\rho)_{\rm theory}=0.1770~{\rm cm}^2/{\rm g};~(\mu/\rho)_{\rm exp}=0.1774\pm0.0038~{\rm cm}^2/{\rm g}.$ 



(d) Summary of results.

Figure 6. Concluded.

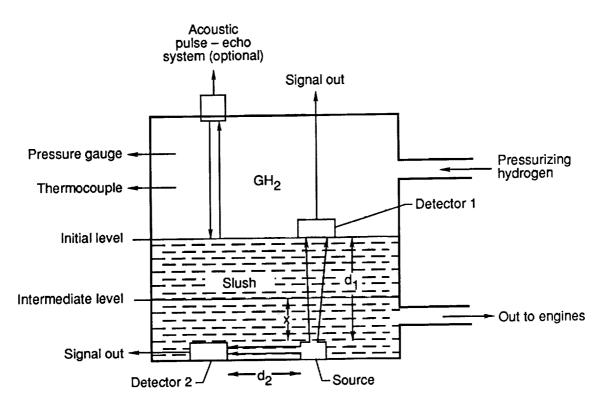


Figure 7. Proposed slush hydrogen monitoring system.

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chemical compounds have E3 transition from the firs $\alpha^2$ -chloroisodurene, and cowell as mixed phases (liquithe selected radiations is influids. This report describ	onstrate the suitability of an ordrogen, mass attenuation of been measured. The Ag <sup>109</sup> t excited state at 87.7 keV in etyl bromide. Measurements id plus solid) in all cases. It leads to the state of the solid in all cases.	K X rays were used for Ag <sup>109</sup> provided the p were made for a single has been shown that the test fluids or phase	probe for monitoring the quantity X- and gamma radiation in five or water and acetic acid, whereas robe radiation for bromobenzene, e phase (gas, liquid, and solid) as he mass attenuation coefficient for ratios in the case of mixed-phase ems investigated.		
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